

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended): A method of user-defined structured interaction online, comprising the steps of:
 - defining a social interaction genre for computer-mediated communication between two or more people;
 - creating an operational instance of the genre, said instance being initialized to a predetermined state;
 - monitoring input from online users operatively connected to said instance;
 - updating a state of the instance and responding to user's requests if said input satisfies a criteria set by the instance's interaction rules; and
 - broadcasting the updated state to all online users operatively connected to the instance.
2. (Original): The method of claim1 wherein the step of defining a social interaction genre includes one of copying and modifying a previously defined interaction genre.
3. (Original): The method of claim1 wherein the step of defining a social interaction genre includes specifying rules of a graphic representation of the genre, including rules specifying how interactions are represented.

4. (Original): The method of claim 3 wherein the graphic representation includes specified symbols representing respective users' roles.
5. (Original): The method of claim 3 wherein the graphic representation includes specified distances from references to proportionally represent action or nonaction of users.
6. (Original): The method of claim 3 wherein the graphic representation includes specified positions representing status of respective users.
7. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of creating an operation instance of a genre includes setting genre parameters.
8. (Original): The method of claim 7 wherein said genre parameters include genre roles.
9. (Original): The method of claim 7 wherein said genre parameters include rule parameters.
10. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said input includes one of text messages, audio clips and video clips.

11. (Original): The method of claim 3 wherein said input includes the user's change in roles by dragging and dropping of graphics elements of the graphic representation of the state of the instance.
12. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said user's requests include requesting to ask a question.
13. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said user's requests include a request for a clarification.
14. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of monitoring includes monitoring the passage of time between inputs by a user.
15. (Currently Amended): A method of user-defined structured interaction online, comprising the steps of:
- defining a social interaction genre for computer-mediated communication between two or more people;
 - creating an operational instance of the genre, said instance being initialized to a predetermined state;
 - monitoring input from online users operatively connected to said instance;
 - updating a state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules; and

broadcasting the updated state to all online users operatively connected to the instance.

16. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules includes sending the rule violator a message.

17. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules includes disconnecting a user violating said rules from the current instance.

18. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules includes barring a user violating said rules from future connections for a specified period of time.

19. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance and executing specified actions in response to enforcement rules includes modifying an iconic representation of a user violating said rules in a graphic representation of the genre instance.

20. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance in response to interaction rules includes changing the genre of the instance.

21. (Original): The method of claim 20 wherein the graphic representation of the instance is changed in response to the changing of its genre.
22. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said step of updating the state of the instance includes changing one or more genre parameters including genre roles.
23. (Original): The method of claim 15 wherein said updating step includes repositioning the icons representing the operative users.
24. (Original): The method of claim 28 wherein said updating step includes modifying icons to represent changes in roles of respective users.
25. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of broadcasting the updated state of the instance includes broadcasting the instance's genre rules.
26. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of broadcasting the updated state of the instance includes broadcasting the instance's genre parameters including role assignments.
27. (Original): The method of claim 1 wherein said step of broadcasting the updated state of the instance includes the broadcast of the graphic representation of the state of the instance.

28. (Original): The method of claim 1, further including the step of identifying a given user by moving a cursor over the icon representing that user.

29. (Currently Amended): A computer-based medium having stored programs readable by a computer for causing the computer to execute method steps for facilitating interaction among a plurality of users operatively connected to the computer, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving requests from the plurality of users to participate in a computer-mediated social interactive session between two or more people;

registering said users by storing user identifications and passwords of respective users;

storing said identifications and passwords in a user database;

authorizing said users as participants in the interactive session upon receiving a clearance signal;

setting parameters and rules governing the interactive session and informing the participants of the parameters and rules;

monitoring inputs from the participants during the interactive session; and

enforcing penalties upon participants violating said rules.

30. (Original): The computer-based medium according to claim 29, wherein said clearance signal is given based on data on users stored in the user database.

31. (Original): The computer-based medium according to claim 29, further including the step of modifying said parameters by said participants.

32. (Original): The computer-based medium according to claim 29, wherein said step of enforcing penalties includes associating violation data with user data of violating participants in the user database.